

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
District Department of Transportation



Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Leif Dormsjo
Director

Before the

Committee on Transportation and Environment

Council of the District of Columbia

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1 pm
Room 412
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
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Good afternoon Chairperson Cheh, members and staff of the Committee. I am Leif Dormsjo, the Director of the District Department of Transportation or DDOT. I am pleased to testify before you today on Mayor Bowser's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget, entitled "Pathways to the Middle Class." As Mayor Bowser recently testified before the Council, each agency plays a critical role in ensuring that District residents in all 8 Wards have the education, economic opportunity, public safety, neighborhoods, environment, and infrastructure they need to reach the middle class. Mayor Bower's Fiscal Year 2016 Budget submission will ensure that our agency and the entire government have the necessary staff and resources to help meet these ambitious goals.

This budget is the product of an unprecedented amount of outreach. The Mayor held three budget engagement forums that were attended by hundreds of residents who described how they would allocate an imaginary \$100 toward key issues facing the District. The Mayor's budget staff also met with Councilmembers and their staff to incorporate their priorities in the budget. Finally, the Mayor and her senior leadership met with numerous community groups as part of the development of this budget. All of this work on the front end has given us a much better budget as a result and we will continue that kind of outreach, transparency, and accountability—including these hearings led by the Council—to fine tune and implement the Fiscal Year 2016 budget.

Let me now briefly describe my plans for DDOT in the coming fiscal year.

The Mayor's FY16 proposed budget for DDOT includes **\$111.4** million in operating funds, **\$159.9** million in local capital dollars, and **184.7** million dollars for Federal-aid funded transportation projects. The Proposed FY16 Operating Budget of **\$111.4** million is an increase of about **\$4.6** million over the FY15 Adopted Budget. This increase can be attributed to an



additional \$4.3 million in federal grant funds from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, or NHTSA, for various safety projects on federal roads within the District. The decrease in the Local Capital Funds can be attributed to adjustments in the Streetcar (\$66.5 million) and South Capitol Street Corridor (\$12.3 million) projects.

Local Capital Projects

DDOT manages and leads a variety of capital projects that move District residents and visitors seamlessly for educational, recreational, and economic opportunities. Some are what we call minor projects, and others are what we term mega-projects, ranging in size, scale, and cost. All should serve as catalysts that propel residents along Mayor Bowser's pathway to the middle class. I will provide an overview of three mega-projects.

- **South Capitol Street / Frederick Douglass Bridge** – The proposed FY 2016-21 Capital Improvement Plan amount for the South Capitol Street project provides \$512.3 million over six years, including a \$200 million enhancement. The proposed funding is critical for the delivery of the replacement of this structurally-deficient bridge and the transformation of an urban freeway into a scenic boulevard that improves multimodal transportation options and literally connects jobs and opportunities on both sides of the Anacostia River.
- **Streetcar** — The proposed FY 2016-21 Capital Improvement Plan amount for the Streetcar project provides \$335.5 million over six years. The overall Streetcar funding remains the same over the six-year plan. However, funding availability has been adjusted to meet the anticipated design and construction schedule. The proposed DC Streetcar budget has shifted major investments in the program into out-years of the CIP to reflect



the delivery schedule for the East-West Corridor from the Benning Road Metro Station to the Georgetown waterfront.

- **H Street Hopscotch Bridge** – The proposed FY 2016-21 Capital Improvement Plan amount for the H Street Bridge project provides \$132.3 million over the six year CIP period. In FY 2016, \$20 million has been proposed for environmental review and preliminary engineering of the Project. This project is important because it is integrally linked with Streetcar as a gateway for the future East-West Streetcar Line. The bridge reconstruction, in turn, is a linchpin for the *Union Station Master Plan* that will modernize Union Station, improve pedestrian access from the surrounding neighborhood, and enable a new neighborhood to emerge on top of the station yard.

Other key items in the proposed six-year CIP are:

- \$14.4 million in FY 2016 for local road resurfacing, an increase of \$9 million over the current year's allotment;
- \$17.9 million in FY 2016 for sidewalk rehabilitation and maintenance, an increase of \$2.5 million over the current year's allotment;
- \$5.1 million in FY 2016 for alley rehabilitation and maintenance;
- \$10 million in FY16 for Urban Forestry to properly care for trees and trail maintenance; and
- \$19.1 in local funds for Circulator buses and facilities.

While I am on the topic of transit investment, the operating budget contains \$24.1 million in local funds in FY 2016 for Circulator operations and \$9.1 million in local funds in FY 2016 for Streetcar operations.



Federally-Funded Activities

DDOT's federal-aid capital budget includes \$184.7 million for projects funded with federal funds plus a local match. About 80% will be used for "core" projects to operate and maintain our assets like federal roads, bridges, traffic signals, and tunnels. The remaining 20% will be used to advance projects such as Oregon Avenue, the Metropolitan Branch Trail to Fort Totten, and Managed Lanes – Phase I.

DDOT will strive to be effective, efficient, accountable and transparent stewards of local and federal funds as we continue to implement programs and projects that will help attain the Mayor's goal of growing and preserving the middle class—in all eight wards.

Significant New Programs and Initiatives

Now let me quickly run through some new programs and initiatives worth highlighting that may generate some interest over the next year.

Vision Zero

Since the start of her administration, Mayor Bowser has been committed to safety as a top transportation priority. DDOT is leading the District's Vision Zero initiative, which seeks to eliminate traffic fatalities in the District. An action plan is being established through interagency coordination and public engagement, and will identify future policy, programmatic and capital needs to guide us towards our goal. While developing the action plan, DDOT is also advancing the design and construction of capital improvements for high crash locations, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, SE corridor around Malcolm X Avenue, SE. The budget rebrands the bicycle and pedestrian fund as the Vision Zero fund to invest in improvements that will help us do what's within our reach to drive down the number of traffic injuries and deaths in the District.



The Parklet Program

Parklets convert one or more on-street parking spaces to mini parks or community seating or art locations. Parklets can increase visibility and vitality of emerging retail nodes and can be most effective when “sponsored” or supported by a local retail business or stakeholder group. The program was developed as a way to activate public space for public use. We will kick off a pilot this month. DC’s parklet program differs from other city’s programs because it allows for year-round use rather than seasonal use.

For the first year’s pilot, funding is being provided by Sustainable DC to cover costs of meter fees. DDOT is working with Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to implement the first round of the program. The goal is to have parklets constructed and ready for public use this summer.

Commercial Loading Zone Management Program

An issue you raised with me at the agency’s performance oversight hearing last month was the Commercial Loading Zone Management Program, which went into effect January 1, 2015. It requires carriers to pay to use commercial vehicle curbside loading zones. Carriers have the option of purchasing one-day or annual permits, or pay through a pay-by-cell option.

So far, 65 companies with 576 commercial vehicles have registered for annual permits. Signs for 99 percent of the loading zones (approximately 590) throughout the city have been replaced to show the Parkmobile identification associated with each loading zone.

Each annual permit allows a carrier to receive a decal to place on the vehicle to allow enforcement personnel to recognize that a carrier has paid. DDOT checks in monthly with DPW to resolve any questions or issues related to enforcing the new program. In addition, DDOT and DPW have met with carriers to address concerns relating to the program and overall operational challenges regarding loading for commercial vehicles.



Conclusion

The resources allocated to the agency in the Mayor's proposed Fiscal Year 2016 budget will be critical in achieving the mission to help grow and preserve the middle class. The Council and this Committee, led by you, Chairperson Cheh, have been key allies in this effort and I appreciate your continued efforts to ensure we operate efficiently and effectively.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to answering your questions.

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